GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2895
ANSWERED ON:17.12.2008
DECLINING POPULATION OF OLIVE RIDLEY SEA TURTLES
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the number of olive ridley sea turtles is decreasing in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise including Orissa alongwith the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS(SHRI S. REGUPATHY)

(a) & (b) Olive Ridley Turtles are migratory species visiting Indian coasts for nesting. Their nesting patterns vary year to year depending upon various factors. Though the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has indicated a globally declining trend in the population of the Olive Ridley Turtles due to factors like trawl fishing, destruction of habitat, global warming etc, there are no reports showing decline in the population of Olive Ridley Turtles in the country.

(c) The important steps taken by the Central Government for the protection of Olive Ridley Turtles are as follows:
i) Olive Ridley Turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea) has been included in the Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 thereby according them highest degree of protection.

ii) The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 has been amended and made more stringent. The punishments in cases of offences have been enhanced. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that are used for committing wildlife offences. Wide publicity is given on provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 against poaching.

iii) The Central Government provides financial & technical assistance to the State Governments under the various Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The important steps taken by the State Government of Orissa for the protection of Olive Ridley Turtles are as follows:

i) The main nesting grounds of Olive Ridley Turtles have been declared as Protected Areas.

ii) Fishing in the marine sanctuary area and restricted fishing zone is prohibited. Fishermen have been advised to use Turtle Excluding Devise (TED), which is mandatory, during trawling and to avoid trawling during nesting seasons.

iii) Regular patrolling in the sea is carried out by Wildlife Department in collaboration with the State Fisheries Department and Indian Coast Guard.

iv) Co-ordination meetings have been organized with local fishing communities regularly to gain their support in protection of Olive Ridley Turtles. Hoardings have been installed at important fishing bases for generating public awareness.

v) A Central Monitoring Unit in the office of the Chief Wildlife Warden, Orissa, is functioning with the responsibility of monitoring the operation carried out in each camp on a day to day basis. It is receiving and compiling information from the concerned Divisions.

vi) A High Level Committee has been constituted by the State Government under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Orissa for reviewing the sea turtle protection activities from time to time for coordinating among various departments and the Indian Coast Guards. In the current year the meeting of the above Committee was held on 29.11.2008. Further, the Assistant Conservators of Forests of coastal forest divisions have been declared as authorized officers under the Orissa marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1981 to check illegal fishing vessels entering in to the prohibited fishing zones in the Orissa coastal waters.